

The PREVENTION CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER

Poverty Prevention: *Free to Choo\$e*

—Lil Dupree

A lack of financial literacy is an enormous barrier for people trying to build economic independence. The consequences include poor credit history, poor credit scores, use of predatory lenders, higher insurance premiums, lack or loss of mainstream banking access and even bankruptcy. These problems are epidemic among low- and moderate-income families living on the financial edge. More often than not, they have few choices when it comes to accessing mainstream financial services.

Free to Choo\$e is Northwest Montana Human Resources, Inc.'s (NMHR's) response to these issues. It is designed specifically to empower people to take charge of their economic futures and to lead financial lives of choice, rather than necessity or desperation. The program has three critical components: education, support and access to credit.

— **Education:** Families participate in a 10-session, structured financial literacy course. This is a low-barrier course, with dinner and child care provided. It includes a youth class, and a teen/adult class. The FDIC's *Money Smart* curriculum forms the base of the adult course, and class interaction and activities are crucial.

There is a cost of \$5 per week for a single person, and \$10 per week for a family, to help ensure that participants are invested in the course.

— **Support:** As they complete the course, families are matched with a volunteer financial mentor, who provides support for at least one year as the family puts theory into practice. The mentor also helps provide guidance as families begin to address the problems or barriers that have kept them in poverty. The mentor, a local financial professional, is available to help them build a better future, whether that starts with a plan to buy a car, pay off debt, build credit or save for a personal goal. Mentors can answer questions and help with budgeting or strategizing on goals.

— **Credit:** The education and support of *Free to Choo\$e* will be supplemented with critical tools for financial success. Through a generous partnership with Park Side Federal Credit Union, adults participating in the program will be able to open checking accounts regardless of their past banking histories. They will be given access to a \$300 line of credit, which is the same amount payday lenders offer in Montana. These funds will be at normal market interest rates. This will provide an affordable alternative to high-interest loans, and

clients can begin building a positive credit history as they use and pay on their lines of credit.

Outcome measures for *Free to Choo\$e* include: current payments on credit lines, increases in credit scores, decreases in debts/collections, and improved perceptions of financial well-being. While it is too soon to begin to predict long-term results, initial information is very encouraging.

Families have demonstrated an incredible commitment to—and investment in—the program. Most pursued make-up

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The Vicki Column

As we have been prone to do lately, we've chosen a topic—*Schools and Communities*—that is so big that there's no way to do it justice in 24 pages. Schools and communities are far more than two of the prevention domains. They are primary settings where children and youth grind off their rough edges, form themselves into independent beings, are tested—and if we're lucky, come out on the other side of childhood as proactive, healthy adults.

This time of year, communities are busy assisting children and youth with transitions: high school and college graduations, moving from grade school to middle school, and from graduation to the world

of work.

On a personal level, my oldest son is going through all kinds of transitions right now. He'll start middle school in the fall. The orthodontia wire came off this morning, and will remain off until he transitions to braces in January. He went to his first dance this year—a 50s bash hosted by one of the grade schools for all of the local 5th graders. He's in the process of moving down to the basement where he'll have his own space, though so far, he's continued to sleep in the room he's always shared with his brother. Before we agreed to let him make the move, we dug out the window well in the basement bedroom, so that he'd have a good escape route in case of fire. It's a double-edged sword. Looking at him, envisioning the coming years, I find myself thinking, but oh my gosh, *he'll have an escape route.*

The changes are coming so quickly that I find myself watching, holding my breath, knowing that he won't remain poised between his little-kid room and the teen world for long. His new school has been wonderful, and I'm confident that they will provide my son—and by extension, our family—with good resources, a safe place to learn and grow, and the kind of

broader partnerships we all need as our children begin to stretch their wings.

I came across a quote the other day, by author Joyce Maynard. "*It's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it, myself.*"

As we reach and watch, we can consciously create schools and communities that help provide children and youth with enough room to grow, and to grow safely. We can examine our attitudes (spoken and unspoken) about alcohol and drugs, we can create good community norms and expectations. And we can each lend our gifts in ways that provide all of our children with plenty of means to make positive choices and limit the risks that lead to poor ones.

Vicki

P.S. See our next issue for *Schools & Communities II*.

Free to Choo\$e

The first 10-week session of Free to Choo\$e started on January 24, 2008.

— 6 families participated, including:

- 27 adults;
- 6 youth; and
- 14 children.

— 15 families graduated from the class on March 27, 2008.

— Of these, 14 have:

- chosen to work with a mentor for the next 12 months; and
- have opened revolving credit lines at Park Side Credit Union.

The next 10-week sessions begin April 24th and July 10th.

— Both classes are full, with waiting lists.

— Registration is underway for the September class.

— Based on current sign-ups and waiting lists, best estimates indicate that after September, the program will have served approximately 70 families, including:

- 115 adults;
- 35 youth; and
- 55 children.

Free to Choo\$e

Continued from cover

sessions for missed classes, which was particularly encouraging since there were no consequences attached to missing classes. Participants assisted unasked with class set-up and clean-up. At graduation, people offered stories about changes they had already made as a result of the classes, including initiating direct deposit, opening savings accounts, and discarding predatory credit offers.

Word of mouth, referrals and very limited media coverage are all it is taking to fill classes to capacity.

Referrals are coming from a wide variety of sources: friends/relatives who participated in the first class; other Community Action programs of NMHR, Head Start; Habitat for Humanity, CASA, Vocational Rehabilitation, the local health department and family service agencies. Some programs are able to pay or reimburse on course completion for participants' weekly fees.

As with any new program, partnerships have been critical to initial success. Park Side Federal Credit Union has offered tremendous financial, volunteer and moral support. Faith Lutheran Church has provided an ideal physical location for the program, which required a nursery, classrooms and a dining area. The Department of Public Health and Human Services, Plum Creek, Town Pump, Enterprise Car Rental, and JCCS, Inc. have all provided generous financial support for the start-up phase of the program.

In 2009, NMHR plans to double the size of *Free to Choo\$e* in Flathead County, and expand to Lake, Lincoln and Sanders counties. Program staff are documenting all the steps in developing and implementing the program, both for local replication, and to assure replicability in other areas.

—Lil Dupree is the Development Director for Northwest Montana Human Resources, Inc., the Human Resource Development Council in Kalispell. She can be reached at 406.758.5475 or ldupree@kalhrdc.mt.gov.

Closing the Achievement Gap

—Carol Juneau

The National Caucus of Native America State Legislatures (NCNASL) upcoming report, *Closing the Achievement Gap for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Students*, provides a distressing picture of the state of education for Native American students in America's K-12 schools. The data shows Native students performing two to three grade levels below their White peers in reading and mathematics, and 237 percent more likely to drop out of school. The harm done to individual students is disturbing, but perhaps even more alarming is the long-term impact to our communities and our state.

Results from the Early Longitudinal Childhood Studies (ELCS) now being conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics show that as late as 22 months in age, there are no cognitive gaps between American Indian and other students. By kindergarten, though, significant gaps have become evident. Figures from the most recent results from the ELCS indicate that in many areas—literacy, mathematics, understanding shapes, and fine motor skills—AI/AN students start school as the lowest performing group.

Steps need to be taken to help make sure students are ready to learn. A child's participation in early childhood education often lays the foundation for future educational success. Early education exposes children to counting, rhyming, singing, fine motor skills and social interaction, among other things. Research confirms that a child's brain development begins before birth, and that exposure to an age-appropriate learning environment—especially between birth and age 5—can give a child an educational advantage when s/he starts school.

For some populations, including low-income children and children of color, accessing early childhood education can be challenging. Without it, many children do not have access to books, healthy food or a

normal, daily routine, all of which can have a negative effect on school success.

The National Native Caucus has a number of policy recommendations to share with their Legislative colleagues and educational leadership throughout the United States. Included are some that focus on early childhood education.

- Develop and support strong programs for youth and family, understanding that foundations for learning are built between birth and age 5.
- Fund and implement a voluntary, universal pre-K program for three- and four-year-old children, with emphasis on areas with high need/high risk children.
- Support home-based resources and services to families to support early development and learning.
- Facilitate a collaborative effort among states, the federal government and tribes to recognize the long term educational and economic benefits of early childhood education.

An investment in early childhood education pays off, as evidenced by the results of Michigan's High/Scope Perry Pre-School Project. This long-term study showed that 40-year-old adults who had been enrolled in early childhood education at ages 3 and 4 were more likely to graduate from high school and to earn higher incomes. They were also less likely to become involved in criminal activity than children who missed pre-school.

Montana took a significant step in 2007 when it approved full time kinder-

garten. This, along with quality pre-school opportunities, will go a long way toward developing long-term, sustained improvement in the educational achievement of Indian students.

—This article includes excerpts and research from the NCNASL report, *Closing the Achievement Gap for Native Americans 2008*. Carol Juneau Chairs the NCNASL Education Committee and is a State Senator.

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"Montana's economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$19.6 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%."

—Source: Alliance for Excellent Education, February 2008.
www.all4ed.org/files/Montana.pdf

Social Enterprise

The Billings MasterLube operates on a social enterprise model, which means that it operates like any other for-profit enterprise, but has a double bottom line that includes a social impact. Social enterprises are unique because their purpose is central to what they do.

Rather than working to maximize shareholder profits, the goal of a social enterprise is to generate profit for use in furthering social goals.

MasterLube has a long tradition of hiring people other employers would hesitate to, such as high-school dropouts with no job skills or experience, persons who are homeless, ex-convicts or people who have been chronically unemployed.

The MasterLube philosophy lies in offering people the opportunities to work hard while defining and furthering their own progress toward their dreams. It's working. MasterLube has grown from one operation to four, with a huge market share. It has also been named National Operator of the Year.

MasterLube alumni have gone on to get PhDs and CPAs, and to become teachers, counselors, bank tellers, and a lube center operator. Alumni have also gone on to become extraordinary husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and neighbors.

For more information on MasterLube, go to <http://www.masterlube.com/>.

For more information on the social enterprise model, visit the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship: <http://www.schwabfound.org/>

Notes from the Edge A Cinderella Story

Pat Rose has a lot in common with Cinderella, but instead of a Fairy Godmother waving a magic wand, Pat's story features oil technicians waving dipsticks. And rather than being rescued by Prince Charming, Pat rescued herself.

When Pat came to work at MasterLube in January 1985, desperation drove her there. "I was 26 years old, jobless, living on unemployment and I wasn't sure how I was going to make my next house payment," Pat reflected. "I took a risk and asked for a job."

Little did she know that she was embarking on happily-ever-after. Two weeks after her inquiry, MasterLube hired her.

Like most women working at lube shops in those days, Pat was a cashier. She greeted customers, handled money and vacuumed car interiors. After a time, she was cross-trained to check fluids under the hood, too. The job was agreeable and Pat was climbing out of her financial slump, but she had set her hopes even higher . . . or lower, depending on your perspective.

"I wanted the job that paid the most. That was the one under the car, in what we called the pit," Pat said. She suspects that MasterLube managers were apprehensive about letting her go under, but eventually that's what happened. Pat made history as the first woman to work in MasterLube's pit, the first of her many unlikely accomplishments.

Pat wasn't a special case. They did take a personal interest in her goals and success and did all they could to support her path, but she wasn't the only one. "The owner, Bill Simmons, was a mentor and role model," Pat said. "It wasn't just me; he was like that with everybody."

MasterLube has succeeded in an arena where many try, but few succeed: they know how to motivate staff members to be their best. The MasterLube philosophy is that in supporting staff as they pursue their dreams, in turn they'll support MasterLube by being superlative employees.

"MasterLube did the opposite of other employers," Pat said. "Rather than keeping good employees for themselves, they encourage people to go onto bigger and better things."

For Pat, those things included going to college, earning a bachelor's degree, then a master's . . . and eventually a doctorate as well. "While I think I would have found my direction eventually, MasterLube had a huge influence on my life," Pat said. "As we go through life, there are people who guide us—mentors—people who believe in us. And that's everything."

Today Pat owns a private psychology practice in Arizona. She recently married and believes she's fulfilling her life's purpose through her practice. Still, she fondly recalls her days at MasterLube as some of the best of her life. "Of any job I've ever had in my life, that's the one I loved the most," Pat said.

She remembers surprising MasterLube's customers with an unmatched level

of service. Oil changes became a respite from the normal hustle and bustle, a welcome break from an otherwise hectic day. Indeed, superior treatment is

what propelled MasterLube into the forefront of the industry.

"The looks on the customers' faces was priceless," Pat said. "I'm so grateful to have been a part of that."

"MasterLube is the kind of place that brings out the best in people. They see potential and help people find it."
—Pat Rose

Economic Developers: Nontraditional Partners in Prevention

—Gloria O'Rourke

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—It would take a lot of paper and ink to create a comprehensive list of what MEDA members accomplish throughout Montana.

MEDA, Montana Economic Developers Association, is a broad-based organization of individuals from throughout Montana. MEDA got its start 15 years ago with a group of twelve. Today, membership includes more than 225 individuals who are passionate about community and economic development in Montana. Members include professional economic developers, business specialists, government employees and staff members of affiliated non-profit organizations that promote and foster community and economic development activities in Montana. The purpose of the organization is to maintain a network for the communication, education and support of member efforts.

It has been said that economic developers only have three tasks—Business:

1. Retention and expansion;
2. Creation; and
3. Attraction.

These seemingly simple tasks incorporate a long list of skills and expertise, some of which include: knowing and networking with stakeholders; business finance; business assessment; understanding tax tools; importing and exporting; revolving loan fund operations; community and business marketing; target industry studies; community assessment; industrial sites and facilities; infrastructure know-how; strategic planning; community planning; familiarity with appropriate state and federal programs; up-to-date technology (i.e., GIS); technology transfer; and gap financing. It's an intimidating list.

So what is the connection between MEDA and prevention in Montana's communities? Economic developers play a strategic role in building strong communities. Clearly, communities that have a strong economic and business base have more options when it comes to addressing local needs. And yet money is not the end-all to addressing human problems, because even communities with a strong tax base have prevention issues. Thus, whether you live in a fast-growing, thriving business is booming area or an area with a declining

population and low per capita income and employment, economic developers within the community can play an important role.

The role of an economic developer is to increase the economic viability of the community. This isn't the only role that an economic developer can play in terms of prevention. Think of calling on an economic developer when you need a liaison between the public and private sectors, when you need help in leveraging funding or when you need a facilitator who can help coordinate activities and communications among different groups, counties, and government entities. It is part of the economic developer's job to bring everyone to the table, gather resources, match needs with suppliers and build partnerships. Every one of these roles is key to the success of any prevention effort.

MEDA assists, supports and equips Montana's economic development professionals, partially by ensuring that three specific tools are readily available for MEDA members and communities:

1. BEAR;
2. Resource Team Assessments; and
3. Certified Regional Development Corporations.

BEAR (Business Expansion And Retention) is a relatively new statewide program that is growing by leaps and bounds. The purpose is to strengthen local companies and enhance the business climate. Trained BEAR team members visit a business and conduct a confidential in-depth interview. Data is collected and shared with an assessment team, which reviews the information. The assessment team then makes recommendations and provides resource information to help the company or business thrive and grow. This process gives individual business owners a voice and an opportunity to let community leaders know what business needs to sustain itself in the area.

Resource Team Assessments are community assessment and planning tools coordinated by MEDA. This process involves interviewing a large number of people in the community, recording their suggestions, then having a team of experts synthesize the ideas and create implementation ideas for community use. The team suggests ways of accomplishing the community's goals, which have been identified through the process. In terms of prevention, this is a great way to learn about specific needs from the community perspective, as well as to explore new resources and responses for addressing those needs.

Certified Regional Development Corporations (CRDCs) were created by the 2003 Montana Legislature to encourage a regional approach to economic development. The CRDCs facilitate delivery of economic development programs by supporting regional capacity building. The area CRDC is the contact point for assistance and is there to help local officials, communities and businesses assess, plan, and facilitate action within the region. There are 12 regional CRDC offices. For more information about your region, visit: http://businessresources.mt.gov/BRD_CRDC_Offices.asp.

MEDA is continually evolving to better meet the needs of the economic development professionals serving the people of Montana. Resources—financial and human—seem increasingly scarce, so it is essential that we continue to build bridges of communication everywhere we can. MEDA and its membership have an active role to play in the prevention connection of Montana.

—Gloria O'Rourke is the Coordinator for both the Montana Economic Developers Association and the Montana BEAR Project. She can be reached at gloria@meda_members.org. For more information, visit: www.meda_members.org/.

Addressing Poverty through Community Leadership

—Dan Clark

The Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf) commissioned a national survey to explore the perception of poverty and ways to address it. The survey included an oversample of 405 Montanans.

Main findings include:

- 60% of Montanans say a lot of people struggle to make ends meet in their community, compared to 50% of Americans nationwide.
- 47% say that a lot of people are working full time yet still struggling to get by.
- 59% say they know someone personally who works two or more jobs and is struggling to make ends meet.
- 83% of Montanans say a family of four living in their community would need \$30,000 or more to make ends meet, far beyond the federal government's poverty income threshold of \$20,444. One in two (51%) says a family of four would need \$40,000 or more to make ends meet.
- 48% of Montanans say their community is effective at dealing with problems always or most of the time.
- The majority says they want to do more to help those who are struggling, and most (92%) agree that people in their community are willing to help their neighbors.

For more information, visit the Northwest Area Foundation online at www.nwaf.org/.

"We've learned that as a community, we can get together to solve problems. If it's something we think is important for the community as a whole, then as a whole community we get together and share ideas and solve the problems."

—a Horizons community member

Over the past five years, I have noticed increased interest in rural and frontier issues, and enhanced awareness of the common challenges of population decline, changing demographics and poverty.

Montana is largely a *frontier state*, typically defined as fewer than 6.2 persons per square mile. Under this definition, 46 of Montana's 56 counties are frontier. The term evokes images of an open landscape, agrarian lifestyle and hard work. There is real strength and resiliency associated with these geographically isolated communities, where residents share a strong connection to the land and to their heritage.

The federal government has developed complex formulas to define poverty for individuals and families, but in my experience, the designation has little bearing on those who live in small communities. The terms *prosperity* and *poverty* are relative terms on the frontier. In these communities, the reality of poverty isn't that people don't have jobs. Instead, many have multiple, low-paying jobs. The face of poverty on the frontier is that of the working poor, with both parents in the workforce. As a result, we see the poverty of *time*. There is not enough time for family, for yet another job, and, in some instances, not enough time for a project like *Horizons*.

This leads me to reflect about *community* poverty. What does community poverty look like? What is the link between poverty and leadership? How does a community create prosperity for all? These are questions that 21 communities are addressing through the Northwest Area Foundation's (NWAf) *Horizons* program.

For the past 20 months, I have worked with communities from Anaconda to Wibaux as they have implemented the NWAf *Horizons* program. *Horizons* is a community program aimed at reducing poverty by building leadership within communities with populations of fewer than 5,000.

Horizons explores a theory of change that links poverty solutions with leadership development. This process begins with an inclusive community dialogue about poverty—what it looks like and what actions can be taken to address it. Poverty in this context is much more than a lack of financial resources. It also means lack of social resilience, vision for the future and hope. Building community capacity through leadership development enables a community to address issues that have either been too complex to tackle or lacked the critical mass willing to initiate change.

Through *Horizons*, each community defines what poverty looks like in their community—and decides how to take action to address it. Most communities have addressed the appearance of poverty by organizing communitywide cleanups. For example, Forsyth used its social network to identify those who needed assistance to clean up their property. Community members helped one elderly gentleman remove several old appliances and other items from his home and yard. On the verge of tears, he said, "I never thought anybody cared this much."

For the people in Wibaux, not having a medical clinic was an expression of poverty. For years, people lamented this absence, but didn't have the support or process to bring it to the level of an initiative. After collaborating with many partners, Wibaux now has a community clinic providing medical services five days a week.

Each participating *Horizons* community has mapped the course to prosperity. Although they continue to face challenges, they are moving forward with hope and skills to create the future they have envisioned.

—Dan Clark has been the *Horizons* Program Director, which is facilitated by the MSU Extension Office. He is transitioning to his new position as Director of MSU's Local Government Center. He can be reached at daniel.clark@montana.edu.

Teen Parents and the Law

—*Teen parents are likely to be less educated, have more children, more nonmarital births, and more unintended births than women who postpone childbearing.*¹

A

dolescent parents face enormous challenges in acquiring parenting skills while navigating age-appropriate developmental issues of their own. Child abuse, neglect, poverty, and homelessness are more likely to occur in households headed by unmarried teens.

Teen Parents and the Law (TPAL) is an intervention program developed in 1996 by Street Law for the purposes of strengthening the families of teen parents and preventing child abuse and neglect. Each of its 23 lessons offers practical knowledge, information and life skills. As a result of participating in TPAL, teen parents develop a better understanding of family law and legal practices; improve resiliency skills such as communication and problem-solving; improve family management, especially child discipline; and identify available community resources. The *Young Parents' Education Center* in Great Falls has implemented TPAL in order to help build protective factors for teen parents, reducing the likelihood of violence (and in particular, child abuse and neglect) in teen homes, schools and communities.

According to the 2006 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, several risk factors are significantly higher in Cascade County than in the rest of the nation. These include community disorganization, transition and mobility, the perceived availability of handguns and drugs, and low neighborhood attachment. Academic failure is a significant risk factor, primarily for students in grades 8 and 10. Other prevalent risk factors among Cascade County families include favorable parental attitudes toward drug use and antisocial behavior within the family. Sensation-seeking, rewards for antisocial behavior, rebelliousness and interaction with antisocial peers are all elevated for Cascade County students.

To mitigate these risk factors, the Young Parents' Education Center teaches parenting teens how to analyze and adopt non-abusive methods of discipline, identify laws that govern, protect, and support the family, and manage conflict at home and in the community. Teen parents build resiliency by practicing and demonstrating

improvement in communication, problem solving and critical thinking, cooperation, and empathy. Those who have already had an encounter with the legal system have the opportunity to learn that the laws are designed to protect them and their children, and how to utilize community services for prevention rather than intervention.

Linda Bennetts, Program Director for the Young Parents' Education Center, says that the program activities, funded through a Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities grant from the Montana Board of Crime Control, are crucial to the implementation of intervention and prevention efforts with this high-risk target population. Last year, nearly 90 percent of participants surveyed showed an improvement in anger management and coping skills, positive attainment of skills to improve parent/child relationships, and improved knowledge of child development. Additionally, 95 percent of the teen parents responding to the survey reported increased self-esteem and confidence in their parenting. All of their children were current on immunizations and functioning at developmentally appropriate stages.

Although other prevention and intervention programs can teach parenting skills and enhance self-esteem, TPAL adds a vital missing component by providing teen parents with knowledge of the legal system, teaching them how to access resources while helping them function in the adult world.

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The number of teen parents in Montana is on the rise; Montana's teen birth rate increased 9 percent in 2006, the largest single year increase since 1992.

The Young Parents' Education Center in Great Falls is a school-based resource center that assists pregnant and parenting teens or young adults in overcoming barriers to completing their high school educations. Program components include childcare, parenting education, vocational planning and pregnancy prevention counseling.

The TPAL program provides opportunities for parenting teens. Teen parents:

- participate in weekly parenting classes;
- attend parenting seminars presented by community resource professionals;
- enroll in a voluntary weekly peer support group;
- meet with YPEC Director, Family Support Specialist, or the Parent Educator to address individual risk factors and utilize TPAL tools; and
- interact with peers and instructors through a variety of teaching and learning techniques.

For more information, contact Linda Bennetts at 406.268.6665.

The Montana University System Rigorous Core

— 4 years of English with college-prep
or research-writing course.

— 3 years of Social Studies:
*American History, World History or
World Geography plus another
third year course.*

— 4 years of Mathematics:
*Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and
one or two years beyond Algebra II
depending on which level the student
started high school.*

— 3 years of Laboratory Science:
*Earth Science; Biology; Chemistry
or Physics.*

— 2 years of World Language and one
year of Computer Science, Visual and
Performing Arts or Vocational
Education.

The opinions expressed herein are
not necessarily those of the
Prevention Resource Center and the
Addictive and Mental Disorders
Division of the Montana
Department of Public Health
and Human Services.

The Prevention Resource Center
and the Addictive and Mental
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Department of Public Health and
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known disability that may interfere
with a person participating in this
service. Alternative accessible
formats of this document will be
provided upon request. For more
information, call AMDD at (406) 444-
3964 or the Prevention Resource
Center at (406) 444-3484.

Paving the Way to Success

—Linda McCulloch, Superintendent of Public Instruction

A high caliber education has a very strong impact on communities. Since education and workforce preparation starts (and sometimes ends) in the K-12 system, Montana's students need the very best education possible, one defined by stimulating course work and delivered by talented educators. Students must be prepared to challenge themselves in school, and their parents need to know what their children must have in order to be prepared after graduation.

The Rigorous Core Curriculum for high school students was developed by the Montana University System. This is a great way for students to position themselves for success after graduation. The Rigorous Core requires four years of upper-level mathematics, four years of English, three years of social studies, three years of laboratory science and three years of world languages, computer science, visual and performing arts or vocational education.

A study released in 2007 by the ACT found that higher-level mathematics and science courses correspond with greater average increases in ACT Mathematics and Science scores. More specifically, a student who takes Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Trigonometry and Calculus will, on average, score 2 points higher on the ACT Math section than a student who only takes Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry. For science, a student who takes Biology, Chemistry and Physics will on average score 1.2 points higher on the ACT Science section than a student who takes only General Science and Biology.

Higher test scores are not the only advantage of the Rigorous Core curriculum. The benefits for students go beyond college readiness to career readiness. A student who completes the Rigorous Core is more likely to graduate from high school, enroll and succeed in college, not need remedial courses in college, obtain a 3.0 GPA or higher in the first year of college and earn a degree.

A student's high school grade point average (GPA) is not the only factor to determine college acceptance. The academic intensity of coursework is considered in context with a student's GPA. It is vital

that college-bound students are prepared for college level courses by getting experience doing similar work while in high school.

For students who are not planning to attend college, the Rigorous Core curriculum still provides many advantages. Completing this curriculum increases the likelihood a student will get a diploma, improves the chance the student will succeed in a career and earn a salary large enough to provide for a family. Textbooks used in vocational schools are written at a higher level than high school texts and—in some cases—entry-level college texts, because of the technical language used. If students can maximize their reading skills by taking Rigorous Core classes, they will succeed with greater ease at a two-year college or workforce training program because they will be able to fully comprehend the reading materials and thus to benefit from textbook assignments.

Our future is not simply the responsibility of the state and students. Businesses have a role in ensuring that the workers of tomorrow are prepared. They can model what is expected of the next generation by offering mentoring programs, internships and summer jobs. Students also need to understand why Rigorous Core is important. There is no better way to help students understand than to place them in a hands-on environment. A recent trade article summed it up best, "There's no pride to be found clearing the pool of abandoned sinkers. Wouldn't you rather cheer on the swimmers you worked so hard to train?"

—Linda McCulloch is in her second term as Montana's State Superintendent of Public Instruction. As a teacher and former legislator, she is committed to ensuring a quality education in Montana. Linda holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Supervision of Library Media Programs from the University of Montana. Linda McCulloch has been in education since 1978, teaching in schools across Montana, including Ashland, Missoula, and Bonner.

Connecting Schools and Communities

—Susan Dotter

The Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) is a professional development program designed to help educators ensure that each student, regardless of ability or disability, leaves public education and enters the community with social and academic competence. The MBI philosophy holds that schools and communities must work together to meet the diverse needs of students, while honoring the traditions and contributions of the family and the community.

When parents are involved, we see improved grades and test scores, healthier attitudes and self-esteem, better attendance rates, fewer dropouts, more post-secondary education, and improved classroom behaviors. MBI efforts emphasize proactive strategies to engage families and community partners, centering on categories established by Dr. Joyce Epstein, Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University. Schools throughout the nation use her work as a framework for family and community involvement.

Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as learners.

MBI schools are encouraged to create “MBI at HOME” classes that teach parents ways to promote positive behavior and academic success. Classes are offered at various times, in various locations, and in families’ native languages. Schools may also offer focus groups on parenting topics and sponsor school-based family activities. When parents and schools work together, families are more likely to understand how schools work and thus to place a higher value on the importance of education.

Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and student progress.

School staff show respect for families and value their opinions. Traditionally, school contacts with families have tended to focus on problems. MBI schools stress positive communication instead, with good news cards and phone calls. Progress reports are sent on a regular basis. Many

communication strategies exist, ranging from face-to-face and telephone to email and newsletters. Efforts are made to establish contact with each and every family. Schools collect data through parent surveys to determine the effectiveness of these strategies.

Volunteering: Recruit and organize volunteer help and support.

Exemplar schools have volunteer centers with volunteer coordinators. Families are not only welcome in the school, they provide a wide range of assistance, including creating posters and bulletins boards, soliciting for behavior incentives, reading to students and/or showcasing special talents. Schools and families benefit when parents and community members offer their time and efforts.

Learning at Home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.

Schools can establish a “Homework Hotline” or post assignments on-line or in other accessible places. Schools establish the use of student planners/assignment notebooks as part of schoolwide expectations. Parents and students are informed about the value of and reasons for homework and teachers demonstrate reasonable homework expectations. When parents and teachers work together, students display greater motivation and more positive attitudes toward homework.

Decision-making: Include parents, community members and students in school decisions, and in developing leaders and representatives.

Participating schools recruit family members for their MBI teams or other decision-making committees. Scheduling conflicts can be alleviated by offering alternating meeting times and by providing childcare. Including family and community members in decision-making creates communities that are more willing to support schools.

Collaborating with the Community: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, student learning and development.

MBI teams are encouraged to make presentations to community groups, including local workplaces and service organizations. Schools also utilize local businesses and organizations in Greeters Programs. By inviting college students, clergy, city/county officials, law enforcement, service organizations, high school clubs, senior citizens, school board members and sports teams to welcome students to the building, the day starts on a positive note. Community members serve as speakers, mentors and tutors. In addition, MBI schools teach sportsmanship and use athletic events as an opportunity to involve the community through positive behavioral expectations, which are posted and read to the crowd. Because athletics often represent the heart of small Montana towns, coaches are recruited and trained for MBI involvement.

To sum it up, MBI fosters the belief that the education of today’s youth is a community responsibility. Research supports positive outcomes for students when families are actively engaged in partnerships with schools. When schools, families and communities work together to support learning, students succeed—not just in school, but throughout life.

For more information on the MBI, visit: <http://opi.mt.gov/mbi/> or contact Susan Dotter at sdotter@helena.k12.mt.us.

THE PRC

To get the Prevention Connection electronically, sign up for the Prevention Resource Center (PRC) Hot News or to look into the PRC VISTA Program, go to: www.prevention.mt.gov

VISTA Site Applications

Prevention Resource Center (PRC) VISTA site applications are due in March and September of each year. Visit the PRC website for details: www.prevention.mt.gov

Prevention After School

—Tim Brurud

—The parents of more than 28 million school-age children work outside the home, and as many as 14 million latchkey kids go to an empty house on any given afternoon.



Recent studies indicate that the top concern of parents is the safety of their children during afterschool hours. There is good reason for that. In the hours after schools dismiss kids each day, violent juvenile crime increases sharply, and prime time for all types of juvenile crime begins. The peak hours are 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., the hours when children are most likely to become victims of crime, be in an automobile accident, smoke, drink or use drugs. Afterschool programs that connect children to caring adults and provide constructive activities are among the most powerful tools for preventing juvenile crime.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line is a key component of the Havre-based prevention agency HELP (Havre Encourages Long-Range Prevention) Committee. Many of the prevention specialists working with HELP are able incorporate elements of their programs into the club schedule.

— The DELTA project works to reduce domestic violence. Clubmembers learn the Second Step curriculum as well as empathy, anger management skills and problem-solving techniques.

— The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) offers Alternative to Suspension classes, a tobacco education program designed to supplement or replace school suspension for minors found in possession of tobacco. This program is designed to help a youth recognize tobacco addiction and encourages appropriate decision making to make healthier lifestyle choices. *reACT!* is a youth-driven group that promotes peer advocacy and leadership to counter the growing influence of corporate tobacco's attempts to recruit youth as tobacco users.

— The *Power Hour* program provides homework assistance and incentives for kids to develop the positive study skills that will serve them long after they have finished school. There are also a number of annual prevention outreach programs, including Red

Ribbon Week, a campaign to increase awareness and to prevent initiation of drug use.

— *SMART Moves* (Skills Mastery and Resistance Training) offers age-specific curriculum to groups from the primary grades through high school. The goal is to foster sound decision making skills when it comes to choices concerning high-risk behaviors including the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line opened its doors on July 1, 2002 and has sustained its place as one of the community's most stable afterschool resources. The club is open weekdays from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M. to target "latchkey" hours. It also offers extended evening (teen) hours twice a week. Since opening, the club has had 1,882 members, with an increasing average daily attendance currently at 198 members a day. In 2007, members of the Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line spent nearly 52,000 hours at the Club.

There has been a remarkable payoff. Minor in Possession (MIP) offenses and other youth crimes had steadily increased in Hill County throughout the 90s until 2002, when the Boys & Girls Club opened. Since then, MIPs have dropped 12.5 percent, from 626 in 2002 to 548 in 2006. Other youth crimes dropped 44 percent, going from 566 in 2002 to 317 in 2006.

—Tim Brurud is the Director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line in Havre. He can be reached at 406.265.6206, extension 318 or by e-mail at brurudt@dv.havre.k12.mt.us.

Young people face a number of dangers during the hours after school.

— *There are approximately 20 to 25 hours per week that children are out of school while most parents are at work, creating an "after-school gap."*

— *Self-care and boredom can increase the likelihood that a young person will experiment with drugs and alcohol by as much as 50 percent.*

— *Youth tend to develop patterns of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (or nonuse) between ages 12 and 15.*

— *Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to:*

• *skip classes at school than teens who do participate.*

• *use marijuana or other drugs.*

— *Non-participating teens are also more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity.*

According to a recent Columbia University policy report, good afterschool programming should build on the young person's strengths rather than focus on weaknesses. Additionally, good programming should provide:

— *Opportunities to develop strong, positive relationships with adults, leadership and decision-making skills.*

— *An environment that helps young people develop positive relationships with their peers.*

— *Challenges youth can rise to.*

— *Enriching, creative activities they can participate in.*

Source: *Afterschool Alert Issue Brief*
#27. April 2007.
www.AfterschoolAlliance.org.

The Brain Connection: *The Neurobiology of Addictive Behaviors*

—Mary Anne Guggenheim, MD

As a corollary to the old adage, *Be careful what you ask for*, I should add, *Be careful what you promise to do*. When I was asked to write something about brain development and function for this publication a few months ago, I easily said yes. The first two *Brain Connection* articles* spoke about brain structure and brain development, which were part and parcel of my work for more than four decades. I know the basic story and love to share it. So far, so good.

It's when I offered to write a chapter more directly related to the general theme of the *Prevention Connection* that I might have been more cautious. I had some general knowledge going back several decades about the neural substrate of drug addiction and thought it would be interesting to update and present the information. What I didn't fully appreciate was how the world relating to the neurobiology of addiction has exploded in the last 15 or 20 years. Every new insight led to a dozen new questions.

I have read and learned a lot: this topic is incredibly complex and hypotheses are in a constant state of change. The take-home message is that addictive behaviors (substance abuse as well as other addictions) are, in large part, a brain *disease*.

In Part II of this series, I described the different stages and timing of brain development. In a few sentences, I summarized the stage of synaptogenesis and neuronal network formation, and described cell-to-cell communication via neurotransmitters. This is the essence of how the brain works. A reasonable understanding of this process is helpful in considering the neural substrate of addiction.

Neurons have the capacity to synthesize substances. When molecular substances are released from cell membranes at locations that closely approximate another neuron (a synapse), they have the potential to alter the properties of that second neuron. Such molecules are called *neurotransmitters*. Each neuron has thousands of synapses along its axonal and dendritic branches. This is where the neurotransmitters the brain produces (determined by

genetically controlled intracellular processes) are released. Each neuron also has specific receptors on the surface of its cell membrane that "fit" (via chemical and spatial characteristics) with specific neurotransmitters released by other neurons. This allows for the development of very complex neuronal networks that consist of hundreds of thousands of neurons that cover extensive anatomic distances, with many permutations of feedback loops. The receptors for each specific neurotransmitter are complex multi-unit, three-dimensional structures that exist within the cell membrane. The sub-units can vary, so that there may be many slightly different receptors for the same neurotransmitter, each with a different affinity—and sometimes a different outcome in the cell—when activated by the specific neurotransmitter.

At present, we know of two neurotransmitter action types on the post-synaptic (receiving) neuron. The first results in rapid changes in membrane "pores," which allow sodium, potassium, chloride and/or calcium to move across the cell membrane. This alters the cell's electrochemical state, making it more (excitatory) or less (inhibitory) likely for that neuron to have a brief electrical discharge called an *action potential*. One example of this function happens at the synaptic connections between motor neurons and muscle cells, in a process that underlies all muscle activity. A cell body located in the spinal cord (the motoneuron) has a long cell projection (the axon) that extends via the peripheral nerve to a muscle. At this synapse or neuromuscular junction, acetylcholine (ACh) is released. If the "dose" is large enough (i.e., enough motoneuron units fire simultaneously), the muscle cell's internal milieu is altered so that contractile proteins are activated and the muscle cell contracts.

Various drugs can either augment or block the ability of ACh to bind to the muscle receptor. (This is the underlying mechanism for paralytic substances.) This is a fast process, occurring in microseconds. This type of fast neurotransmitter activity also occurs within the brain, but

This is Your Brain on Drugs

Drugs of abuse stimulate a common reinforcement pathway in the human brain, potentially leading to addiction. This reinforcement pathway, composed of central nervous system structures and the endogenous neurotransmitters communicating between these structures, is sometimes called the reward pathway.

The brain's reward pathway is made of neurons that release chemicals when stimulated, which leads to feelings of well-being. This brain reward system evolved to ensure continuation of activities essential to the survival of the species, such as sexual activity and feeding behaviors. Activities that activate this pathway become associated with 'feeling good.' Drugs of abuse stimulate this "brain reward" pathway in a similar fashion, and this is why substance users experience feelings of pleasure or with use. When drugs of abuse are repeatedly used, they may "commandeer" the brain reward system, driving compulsory drug use to the exclusion of other adaptive activities.

Source: Neuroanatomy and Physiology of the "Brain Reward System" in Substance Abuse. http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/cadd/a_drug/essays/essay4.htm

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The Addiction "Virus"

One could compare the mechanism of drugs of abuse with that of viruses. Viruses and drugs of abuse are both foreign to the host. Viruses enter an animal's cells and use the pre-existing "machinery" to synthesize more viruses, thus promoting their own survival. As the viruses infect more and more cells, the organism becomes ill. Just as viruses take over cell function throughout the body, drugs of abuse modify cell function in brain structures, leading to modifications in behavior. Drugs enter the human brain and use its "machinery" (the reward pathway) to promote continued use. Just as the cell's survival is dependent on its machinery, so is the survival of the organism dependent on an intact brain reward pathway.

Source: *Neuroanatomy and Physiology of the "Brain Reward System" in Substance Abuse.* http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/cadd/a_drug/essays/essay4.htm

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instead of a muscle twitching, the post-synaptic neuron has its electrochemical balance altered to either promote or inhibit that cell's electrical activity. This was first understood in the 1950s and was one of the first seminal advances in neurobiology.

Recently, neuroscientists have identified a second type of neurotransmitter function. Rather than briefly modifying the internal electrochemical status of the neuron, the neurotransmitter-receptor interaction initiates a cascade of biochemical reactions within the post-synaptic cell. Initially an enzyme (a protein kinase) activates a so-called "second messenger system" (cyclic AMP and G-proteins) within the cell

membrane. This in turn initiates processes that can alter cytoplasmic nucleotides, structural proteins and other components within the cell. These processes are slow events (compared to the electro-chemically mediated action potential pathway). Most importantly, they can permanently alter neuronal structure and, thus, function. This second type of neurotransmitter function is crucial for brain functions that retain an "imprint" of past activity, which must occur for learning and memory. It is this second type of neurotransmitter activity that underlies addictive behaviors.

So far, several dozen small molecules have been identified as neurotransmitters within the brain. They fall into 3 major groups:

- (1) amino acids, e.g. ACh, glycine, glutamate, and gamma-amino butyric acid (GABA), which primarily function as inducers of either excitatory or inhibitory "fast" neuronal activity;
- (2) biogenic amines, e.g. serotonin, dopamine, nor-adrenaline, histamine, and
- (3) neuropeptides, e.g. vasopressin, beta-endorphin, corticotrophin, and Substance P.

This is not a comprehensive list, but one that provides examples. In some circumstances, hormones such as estrogen and testosterone can function like neurotransmitters.

Dopamine and the reward system

In 1952, two Swedish researchers proved that the small molecule dopamine (DA) is a neurotransmitter. It is produced by neurons in the brain and by the adrenal medulla (central part of the adrenal gland). Dopamine in the blood stream is converted to epinephrine and nor-epinephrine which, along with ACh, are the neurotransmitters of the sympathetic nervous system. This system controls such functions as blood pressure, heart rate, gut peristalsis and sweating. Depletion of DA in certain brain areas (basal ganglia) underlies Parkinson's disease.

In the brain, dopamine is found in only about one percent of all neurons. These DA-rich brain areas are primarily in the striatum and midbrain,

deep within the brain. DA neurons are part of the networks that help regulate mood, cognition, attention and hypothalamic (and thus hormonal and autonomic) functions. Although the specific brain networks are yet to be identified, over-production of DA seems related to schizophrenia, since drugs that block DA in the brain are therapeutic for that disease. Pertinent to this discussion, DA is the primary neurotransmitter of a neuronal network, the brain reward system, the crucial brain system that underlies addiction.

In 1954, Drs. Olds and Miller identified a brain pathway in rodents necessary to establish operant conditioning paradigms relevant to addiction. When a small electrode was placed in specific brain locations, the animal would repetitively press a bar to stimulate this brain network to the exclusion of every other activity, including drinking, eating, sleep and sexual activity. The anatomic system they identified consists of the *ventral tegmental area* (VTA) in the upper midbrain, the nucleus accumbens (NAc) in the medial frontal lobe, and its major projections to the pre-frontal cortex. This neuronal network, often called the *mesolimbic dopamine system*, is also connected to hypothalamic nuclei and to the amygdala. It interacts with brain networks crucial to learning, memory, and attention.

Of all of the neurotransmitters currently identified, dopamine is the pivotal molecule involved with addictive behaviors.

The primary neurotransmitter of this neuronal network is DA. This discrete brain system is activated by all addictive drugs, as well as by natural stimuli such as eating and sex. Some drugs (cocaine and methamphetamine) directly activate the VTA and NAc, whereas other drugs (alcohol, opiates, nicotine) initially interact with other receptors and neuronal networks, which *then* activate this mesolimbic dopamine system. In experimentally addicted animals that compulsively self-administer the addictive substance, removal of the mesolimbic dopamine system stops the addictive behavior, but additional negative effects on learning, mood, attention and memory may also occur, precluding this approach as a therapeutic option.

Complexities of reward pathways

The results of research on addiction since these seminal discoveries of the 1950s are complex—as are people caught within the spectrum of drug addiction. The more we learn about the specifics of brain function, the more we realize how little we really understand. Following, however, are a few generalizations related to drug addiction that seem well established.

1. ***There is a biologic difference between addiction and dependence,*** even though recent editions of the DSM use the words interchangeably. In essence, addiction is the urge to seek/take a substance (or undertake an activity), even knowing the adverse consequences. Some addictive drugs (alcohol, opiates) produce predictable physical changes (e.g. seizures, tremors, cramping, nausea or sweating) when they are withdrawn. Cessation of other addictive drugs (cocaine, methamphetamine) does not result in identifiable withdrawal symptoms. The mechanisms of the withdrawal symptoms of drug dependence are separate from the underlying neurobiologic substrate of addiction.
2. ***All drugs of addiction activate the dopamine mesolimbic (reward) pathways, either directly or indirectly.*** Chronic drug exposure results in permanent structural alterations of these brain regions (increased dendritic branching and spine/synaptic density as well as changes in intracellular biochemical processes).
3. The initial assumption was that activation of the DA brain reward system resulted in pleasure/euphoria. Drugs of abuse surpass (by 5 to 10-fold) the magnitude and duration of the dopamine increases that occur in the NAc when triggered by natural reinforcers such as food and sex. The conclusions of the last several decades of experimental work is that ***the increases in dopamine in this system are not related to reward per se, but rather to the prediction of reward, or salience.***

Salience refers to stimuli (external environment or internal, such as memory) that arouse and result in an attention or behavioral switch. For example, an experimental animal placed in an environment in which a past exposure to an addictive drug occurred will demonstrate activation of the brain reward system. Also, even if the reward (pleasure/euphoria) of the drug no longer exists, motivation for further access to the drug persists. These conclusions are based on complex animal experiments and seem consistent with behavioral patterns of humans who are addicted to drugs.
4. ***From a developmental and evolutionary perspective, the brain reward system is well preserved and present in all mammals.*** Core parts are present in more primitive creatures, including insects (fruit flies) and roundworms (*C. elegans*). These species have very simple and well-defined nervous systems. Despite their primitive nature, these animals have the ability to seek food, avoid danger and procreate—the *sine qua non* of evolutionary survival. The basic DA receptor and secondary messenger systems that exist in mammalian neurons are present in these organisms. A great deal of information about genetic mutations and intra-neuronal molecular mechanisms relevant to the mesolimbic reward system has come from experimental studies in these animals.
5. ***There are many parallels between substance addiction and other compulsive behaviors*** (e.g., gambling or sexual compulsions), which has been demonstrated through the use of neuroimaging, as well as genetic and neurotransmitter studies in humans and other animals.

The Reward System

The core structures of the brain reward pathway are located in the limbic system, a set of primitive structures in the human brain. Some functions of the limbic system are to monitor internal homeostasis, mediate memory and learning. It also drives important aspects of sexual behavior, motivation, emotion and feeding behaviors. The limbic system primarily includes the hypothalamus, amygdala, hippocampus, septal nuclei, and anterior cingulate gyrus. Also important in the function of the limbic system is the limbic striatum, which includes the nucleus accumbens, ventral caudate nucleus and the putamen. The nucleus accumbens (NA) has been implicated as an especially important structure of the brain reward pathway because drugs of abuse target it. Other structures important in the brain reward system include the amygdala and the ventral tegmental area (VTA).

Several other systems also have an influence on the brain reward pathway. The endocrine and autonomic nervous systems interact via the hypothalamus and the pituitary. These structures help modulate the reward pathway.

Source: Neuroanatomy and Physiology of the "Brain Reward System" in Substance Abuse. http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/cadd/a_drug/essays/essay4.htm

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Drugs of Abuse and the Reward Pathway

Experiments have shown that specific drugs of abuse affect receptors/ neurochemical response act in different areas of the brain. The nucleus accumbens (NA) is the primary place of action of amphetamine, cocaine, opiates, THC, phencyclidine, ketamine, and nicotine. Opiates, alcohol, barbiturates and benzodiazepines stimulate neurons in the ventral tegmental area (VTA). The final common action of most substances of abuse is stimulation of the brain reward pathway by increasing dopamine. In general, the positive effects or "high" of using a drug occur immediately or shortly after use, by the action of increasing dopamine.

The closer positive and negative effects are to the actual time of drug use, the more likely an individual is to associate these effects with the drug. Unfortunately, the negative consequences of use often occur much later and are more unpredictable than the immediate reward associated with drug administration.

Source: Neuroanatomy and Physiology of the "Brain Reward System" in Substance Abuse. http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/cadd/a_drug/essays/essay4.htm

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6. *Animal and human epidemiologic studies conclude that genetic factors make up approximately 50 percent of the vulnerability to addiction.*

Some candidate genes have been identified, but none have been definitively established. Environmental factors that contribute to addiction have stress as a common denominator. Stress results in the release of a neuropeptide, corticotrophin-releasing factor (CRF). CRF, in turn, has effects on the amygdala, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis,

and other brain systems. In non-human primates social status affects D2 receptor (a subtype of dopamine receptors) expression in the brain. Animals that achieve a dominant status show increased numbers of D2 receptors and are reluctant to administer cocaine. In contrast, subordinate animals have lower D2 receptor numbers and readily administer cocaine. The occurrence of drug addiction in individuals with mental illness is higher than the general population. The reasons for this are likely multifactorial, but some researchers postulate that the initial effects of the addictive substance may "self-medicate" the underlying brain disorder. There may be additional risk factors for the human adolescent, as frontal lobe brain networks are the last to fully develop, a process not finished until approximately age 20, as noted in the first chapter of this series.

7. *Activation of the DA reward system leads to changes in many other brain networks that serve functions including learning, memory, the hypothalamic-pituitary-endocrine axis, mood, sleep and attention.* So far, attempts to block the primary receptors of addictive drugs have not been successful. Experimental models demonstrate that even when a pleasurable drug effect can be blocked (e.g. naltrexone blocks the euphoria of beta-endorphin release by

narcotics), the drive to obtain/take drugs of addiction persists, even after years of abstinence.

Despite long periods of abstinence, some of the changes that addictive substances produce in the mesolimbic dopamine system remain. Just as with other chronic medical diseases, drug addiction can be managed, not cured. As those of you who work in the field of substance addiction know better than I, prevention is the message.

The important lesson for me is that drug addiction is a chronic brain disease. A brain system that is crucial for survival (from an evolutionary perspective) has gone awry.

—Dr. Mary Anne Guggenheim attended Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, and was trained in pediatrics and neurology. She was a full time faculty member at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver until 1983, when she moved to Helena. For the next twelve years, Dr. Guggenheim had a statewide practice in child neurology; then retired from full-time practice in 1995. Since then, she has kept busy with participation on numerous state-level advisory groups and committees, her grandchildren, fly-fishing and creating custom furniture.

Editor's note: This is the last in a multi-part series that Dr. Guggenheim consented to write for the *Prevention Connection*. The first two pieces were included in the *Alcohol and Tobacco* issue (Fall 2007) and in the *Homeless in Montana* issue (Winter 2007). These pieces laid the groundwork for this article

Experience: *the Best Teacher in Ravalli County*

—Glenda Wiles

For any teenager, a driver's license is the ticket to freedom. It's also a ticket to freedom for parents, signaling a release from daily chauffeuring duties. We do our best to teach drivers education students the importance of safe driving, but we've also learned that experience is often the best teacher. Students need to see how alcohol impairment affects their coordination, judgment and reaction time.

With that in mind, the Ravalli County DUI Task Force established the Impaired Driving Education Program (IDEP) for Ravalli County teens who are in the process of obtaining their drivers licenses or transitioning into high school. The Task Force purchased a Yamaha Rhino 450 All-Terrain Vehicle. The bright-red Rhino is a four-wheel drive that drives like a car and is equipped with a roll bar and seat belts. Kids tell us that the bright red Rhino, with its chrome trim and wheels, looks cool. It has two seats, so the instructor is with the student at all times. And while the student is the driver/operator, the instructor can stop the engine if need be. Kids can't wait for their turn to drive it.

The IDEP program goes to every local school, from Darby to Florence. Instructors set up a driving course with cones in a parking lot at each school. Students are given instruction on driving the Rhino and then allowed to drive the course. This is where the fun begins. After they get comfortable operating the Rhino and the course, students put on the Fatal Vision™ Goggles, which simulate a blood alcohol content of .18. As soon as students put on the goggles, they realize how impaired they are. They can't find the key to turn on the Rhino or successfully shift the Rhino into gear. As they attempt to drive the course, they find themselves knocking down cones, going off course and lacking hand/eye coordination.

Their comments range from "Wow, you've got to be kidding, I really can't do this!" and "Where am I?" to "Oh, man I'm bad when I'm drunk!" They ultimately get to, "I'll never drink and drive!" This is exactly what we want to hear. While we may laugh, students get the point very

quickly. When they finish the course and look back at the number of cones they knocked over, they come to a quick reckoning of what not to do.

On the sidelines, a local law enforcement officer is usually present to take time with students waiting their turn. This helps students begin building a relationship with the officer. Since the course is 'fun' for the students, having law enforcement present helps lend a serious note to the event.

Initial start-up costs included the Yamaha Rhino, cargo trailer, cones, safety vests, goggles, promotional video, trailer logo, safety hitches and equipment for hauling the Rhino. The grand total was \$16,191. Yamaha provided a large discount on the Rhino and the local Yamaha dealer, Al's Cycle, sold us the trailer and accessories at cost. Ongoing costs include staff. We need three people at each course: an instructor to ride in the Rhino with the student and two people to work the cones. Depending upon where we go, counting time, travel and salaries, it costs approximately \$10 to \$13 for each student to run the course. The DUI Task Force provides this service and makes it part of the yearly budget. Finding volunteers to work the cones also helps reduce the IDEP budget.

Within the first year, the IDEP had been offered at all six high schools in Ravalli County. The program was started in April 2007. By the end of April 2008, approximately 400 Ravalli County teens had participated.

Not only is IDEP a great teaching tool, it is a fun way to provide the experience teens need before they get behind the wheel by themselves. This program has been a great tool that helps them make up their minds not to drink and drive long before they finally get the ticket to freedom on a Friday or Saturday night.

—Glenda Wiles is the Coordinator of the Ravalli County DUI Task Force in Hamilton. She can be reached at 406.375.6500.

The Great Falls High School video class produced a promo video for the IDEP. To watch this video, go to: www.ravalli-county.mt.gov. Under Justice/Public Safety, click on the DUI Task Force.

MBI Parent Quiz

MBI high schools and middle schools are encouraged to use this parent quiz during Parent Night or Open House to stress the importance of family and school communication.

1. Do you know your student's current schedule (class, teacher, time)?
2. How many numbers are in your cell phone or easily accessible at school/work for this school (school office, attendance, teachers, principal)?
3. How often do you check out the school website or online grading system?
4. Do you know what our school-wide behavioral expectations are—without looking around the room?
5. Do you know what time your student gets up for school, out the door . . . and gets home?
6. If your student had a problem at school, to whom would s/he go to for help?
7. Would you know where to get information if your child or his/her friends needed help with depression, drugs/alcohol, suicide, bullying, peer issues or other problems?
8. Do you have the names and phone numbers (home and cell) for your student's three best friends?
9. What are the last three books your child has read?
10. How about the last three movies?
11. What are the three websites your child spends the most time on?
12. What are several things your child wants to do in the next five to ten years?

—Quiz adapted from Colorado PBIS

Experience: *the Best Teacher in Ravalli County*

—Glenda Wiles

For any teenager, a driver's license is the ticket to freedom. It's also a ticket to freedom for parents, signaling a release from daily chauffeuring duties. We do our best to teach drivers education students the importance of safe driving, but we've also learned that experience is often the best teacher. Students need to see how alcohol impairment affects their coordination, judgment and reaction time.

With that in mind, the Ravalli County DUI Task Force established the Impaired Driving Education Program (IDEP) for Ravalli County teens who are in the process of obtaining their drivers licenses or transitioning into high school. The Task Force purchased a Yamaha Rhino 450 All-Terrain Vehicle. The bright-red Rhino is a four-wheel drive that drives like a car and is equipped with a roll bar and seat belts. Kids tell us that the bright red Rhino, with its chrome trim and wheels, looks cool. It has two seats, so the instructor is with the student at all times. And while the student is the driver/operator, the instructor can stop the engine if need be. Kids can't wait for their turn to drive it.

The IDEP program goes to every local school, from Darby to Florence. Instructors set up a driving course with cones in a parking lot at each school. Students are given instruction on driving the Rhino and then allowed to drive the course. This is where the fun begins. After they get comfortable operating the Rhino and the course, students put on the Fatal Vision™ Goggles, which simulate a blood alcohol content of .18. As soon as students put on the goggles, they realize how impaired they are. They can't find the key to turn on the Rhino or successfully shift the Rhino into gear. As they attempt to drive the course, they find themselves knocking down cones, going off course and lacking hand/eye coordination.

Their comments range from "Wow, you've got to be kidding, I really can't do this!" and "Where am I?" to "Oh, man I'm bad when I'm drunk!" They ultimately get to, "I'll never drink and drive!" This is exactly what we want to hear. While we may laugh, students get the point very

quickly. When they finish the course and look back at the number of cones they knocked over, they come to a quick reckoning of what not to do.

On the sidelines, a local law enforcement officer is usually present to take time with students waiting their turn. This helps students begin building a relationship with the officer. Since the course is 'fun' for the students, having law enforcement present helps lend a serious note to the event.

Initial start-up costs included the Yamaha Rhino, cargo trailer, cones, safety vests, goggles, promotional video, trailer logo, safety hitches and equipment for hauling the Rhino. The grand total was \$16,191. Yamaha provided a large discount on the Rhino and the local Yamaha dealer, Al's Cycle, sold us the trailer and accessories at cost. Ongoing costs include staff. We need three people at each course: an instructor to ride in the Rhino with the student and two people to work the cones. Depending upon where we go, counting time, travel and salaries, it costs approximately \$10 to \$13 for each student to run the course. The DUI Task Force provides this service and makes it part of the yearly budget. Finding volunteers to work the cones also helps reduce the IDEP budget.

Within the first year, the IDEP had been offered at all six high schools in Ravalli County. The program was started in April 2007. By the end of April 2008, approximately 400 Ravalli County teens had participated.

Not only is IDEP a great teaching tool, it is a fun way to provide the experience teens need before they get behind the wheel by themselves. This program has been a great tool that helps them make up their minds not to drink and drive long before they finally get the ticket to freedom on a Friday or Saturday night.

—Glenda Wiles is the Coordinator of the Ravalli County DUI Task Force in Hamilton. She can be reached at 406.375.6500.

The Great Falls High School video class produced a promo video for the IDEP. To watch this video, go to: www.ravalli-county.mt.gov. Under Justice/Public Safety, click on the DUI Task Force.

MBI Parent Quiz

MBI high schools and middle schools are encouraged to use this parent quiz during Parent Night or Open House to stress the importance of family and school communication.

1. Do you know your student's current schedule (class, teacher, time)?
2. How many numbers are in your cell phone or easily accessible at school/work for this school (school office, attendance, teachers, principal)?
3. How often do you check out the school website or online grading system?
4. Do you know what our school-wide behavioral expectations are—without looking around the room?
5. Do you know what time your student gets up for school, out the door . . . and gets home?
6. If your student had a problem at school, to whom would s/he go to for help?
7. Would you know where to get information if your child or his/her friends needed help with depression, drugs/alcohol, suicide, bullying, peer issues or other problems?
8. Do you have the names and phone numbers (home and cell) for your student's three best friends?
9. What are the last three books your child has read?
10. How about the last three movies?
11. What are the three websites your child spends the most time on?
12. What are several things your child wants to do in the next five to ten years?

—Quiz adapted from Colorado PBIS

Tobacco: A New Generation

The tobacco industry is using four strategies to attract youthful users and keep them hooked once they start.

Flavored products—Cigarettes called SnakeEyes Scotch, vanilla, apple and berry-blend Skoal, wine and cream-flavored little cigars can be highly attractive to youth.

Novelty items—Spit tobacco products that say, *Use me when you can't light up!* sustain nicotine addiction and provide the tobacco industry with detours around smoke-free laws. To entice girls, Camel No. 9 comes in a shiny black box with hot pink or teal borders and lettering that looks like that of a famous perfume. Ads for Camel No. 9 have run in girls' magazines, including *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire* and *InStyle*.

Nicotine manipulation—For both cigarettes and smokeless products, the tobacco industry manipulates nicotine doses. Products marketed toward new users (primarily children) have lower nicotine levels to prevent vomiting. As users develop tolerance, they choose products with increasingly higher nicotine levels.

New health claims—Last year, the tobacco industry lost a federal racketeering lawsuit for saying light cigarettes have health benefits. Now, the industry is claiming that smokeless products are safe, when they are actually highly carcinogenic.

Source: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and American Lung Association, *Big Tobacco's Guinea Pigs: How an Unregulated Industry Experiments on America's Kids and Consumers*, February 20, 2008

Protecting Youth: Tobacco-free Schools Policy

—Linda Lee

Recent reports on the decline in the prevalence of youth smoking in Montana have many of us celebrating. The 2006 *Prevention Needs Assessment*, a survey involving more than 22,000 students from 153 of Montana's 231 middle and high schools, showed a 37 percent decline in youth smoking prevalence between 2000 and 2006, from 27 to 17 percent. In 2005, the Montana legislature included tobacco-free schools within the Clean Indoor Air Act. This law has great potential to reduce youth smoking and spit tobacco use even further.

Montana's law prohibits the use of all tobacco products in public school buildings and on school property. This will play an important role as these highly addictive new tobacco products are introduced. Under this law, no one—not a teacher, janitor, coach, parent, visitor or student—may use any tobacco at any time in or on school property, including on school playgrounds, athletic facilities, school steps, parking lots, administration buildings, gymnasiums, locker rooms and school buses. The only exceptions are for school-sanctioned presentations about the health risks of tobacco.

For parents, teachers and administrators interested in ensuring that the law plays its designated role in preventing tobacco addiction, two factors are worth considering. First, parents, teachers and administrators may need to expand their roles in discouraging smoking as well as use of other tobacco products. Second, these groups need to work together to formulate meaningful school compliance plans to ensure that the law has its intended effect: reducing tobacco use and creating a social norm that tobacco use is unacceptable.

Unfortunately, the tobacco industry has begun releasing youth-oriented products that threaten the decline in youth smoking, and which may drive up use of spit (chewing tobacco) products. There is an array of candy, fruit and alcohol-flavored products wrapped in alluring, colorful packages. These products include cigarettes and little cigars as well as spit tobacco that comes in cans and pouches.

Flavors include banana, pineapple and wintergreen. These products are the backbone for the tobacco industry's graduation marketing scheme that starts kids with appealing products containing reduced nicotine. In addition to fighting the pressure to become tobacco users, today's students also have to fend off the allure of products that look like sticks of chewing gum or consist of sugar-coated tobacco in pouches that can be shoved into their gums where no one will see them.

Ideally, students, parents, teachers and staff should be involved in the implementation of school tobacco policies, which should be published in student and employee handbooks. Signs describing the policy should be prominently posted within school buildings and in outdoor use areas. Implementation should include publicity, activities and events to promote school pride and policy adherence. Raising awareness about the dangers of new tobacco products and how youth are being manipulated by tobacco marketing should occur concurrently with policy implementation.

Many Montana schools have successfully implemented tobacco free schools policies. Methods used to increase compliance with the Tobacco Free Schools Law include: signs at all entrances to school buildings and grounds; PA system announcements during the week and at sporting events; handouts about the law provided during sports information night; stamping participants' hands as they enter games with anti-tobacco messages; and articles in parent newsletters.

As with any law that relies on public awareness and cooperation to achieve compliance, varied and frequent outreach methods increase a school's chances of success. The Montana Tobacco Prevention Program will offer assistance and materials to schools working to improve compliance with this proven effective policy to reduce youth tobacco addiction.

For more information, contact Linda Lee, section supervisor of the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, Department of Health and Human Services, 406-444-9617.

What the Heck is a School Resource Officer?

—Officer Doug Overman

—A School Resource Officer's success cannot be measured in arrests, but in the impact on students' lives and the school environment.

“What do you do? Patrol the hallways or something?”

These questions are often posed to me. It seems the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program is one of the least understood of all law enforcement positions.

The SRO has three main roles in school: teacher, police officer and counselor. In teacher mode, I often talk to history or government classes about citizenship and the Bill of Rights. In health classes, I teach students about the effects of drugs and alcohol. In science classes, I teach crime scene techniques and forensics. In computer classrooms, I present information to students on internet safety and cyber bullying. School Resource Officers are also regular guests at driver's education classes.

While the role of police officer is the primary reason an SRO is in the school, this is actually the least time-consuming of all three roles. Even so, law enforcement covers a whole spectrum of issues at the school level. I frequently investigate issues involving drugs, sexual assault, physical assault, theft and other miscellaneous crimes. Traffic enforcement on and around the campus also falls within the scope of this position. Finally, a large amount of time is spent working with Family Services on student/family issues. Mediation in fights and peer issues also consumes a lot of my time. I also act as a liaison with the school district to ensure that buildings are safe. We help facilitate lock-down and evacuation drills. We coordinate with other emergency services and assist with training for emergencies.

My favorite role, though, is that of counselor/advisor. School Resource Officers have the opportunity to establish strong relationships with kids, but even so, I am often amazed about what they are willing to share with me. Kids are quite honest about family issues, drug use and other very personal issues. They often recognize that their choices are not healthy. Sometimes they just need advice.

The greatest asset an SRO has is time. Prior to the initiation of this program, when an officer was needed at a school, someone called the department. An officer arrived and quickly made a decision about whether or not to make an arrest, then moved on to the next call. The SRO is able to use personal knowledge in creating the best plan of action for the child. S/he is able to factor in family dynamics, prior disciplinary issues, peer interactions and learning disabilities—information a patrol officer has no access to.

Not everyone is comfortable with an armed presence in the school building. Some are alarmed that lock-down drills are frequently practiced, and yet the same people are not at all alarmed about frequent fire drills. In response, I ask, *When was the last school fire that caused a loss of life?* On the other hand, when was the last time an act of violence caused loss of life in a school environment? This isn't fun to think about, but it is a reality we be aware of, prepare for and try to prevent.

My involvement in the SRO program has been the most positive aspect of my career. While some people are concerned about the state of our education system, I am constantly exposed to talented, dedicated teachers and administrators who truly are making an effort to improve our world. I have built some amazing relationships and friends these last few years.

Finally, though, I would like to thank the amazing kids who have given me the privilege of being part of their lives. I am reminded on a daily basis that our schools and our society are producing some truly outstanding young people.

—Doug Overman is an Officer with the Kalispell Police Department and the School Resource Officer for Kalispell Middle School. Officer Overman is also a member of the Montana Governor's Council on Homelessness.

Some Best-practice Strategies to Prevent Bullying

—**Bullying:** Intentionally aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of power or strength..

1. **Focus on the social environment of the school.** Change the climate of the school and social norms, making it “uncool” to bully and “cool” to help.
2. **Assess bullying at your school.** Adults are frequently surprised by the amount of bullying, common types of bullying and the hot spots where it happens. It can be useful to assess bullying through an anonymous student questionnaire.
3. **Garner staff and parent support for bullying prevention.**
4. **Form a representative group to coordinate the school's bullying prevention activities.**
5. **Train staff in bullying prevention and intervention.**
6. **Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying.** Although many school behavior codes implicitly forbid bullying, many do not articulate explicit expectations. It is important to be clear that the school expects students not to bully and to be good citizens, not passive bystanders.
7. **Increase adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs.**
8. **Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations.** All staff should be able to intervene on the spot.

Source: www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

Pink Bunnies and the Community Building Lifecycle

—LaNette Diaz

A Road Map

Before the press conference:

1. Define the issue.
2. Schedule the date and time.
3. Pick the site.
4. Select and train your participants and moderator.
5. Contact the media.
6. Follow up with the media.
7. Develop a press kit.
8. Prepare the room.

Creative promotion:

- gets the community involved;
- raises money;
- can be inexpensive; and
- spreads a specific message

The persuasive message:

- gets the audience's attention;
- is repeated;
- offers benefits or rewards to the intended audience;
- is paired with something valued or rewarding;
- has a low cost attached;
- is endorsed;
- suggests a benefit;
- is consistent;
- appeals to the audience's norms; and
- uses the principle of reciprocity.

Prevention is rooted in the community. Communities define existing risk behaviors and prioritize prevention strategies. The importance of understanding the Community Building Lifecycle and using that knowledge to generate success cannot be overestimated. It is also important to acknowledge that successful community efforts take time. Each step of the lifecycle can equate to a three-month to year-long endeavor. Creative communication can bring stakeholders, community, media and partners together, while keeping the community informed at each step of the lifecycle.

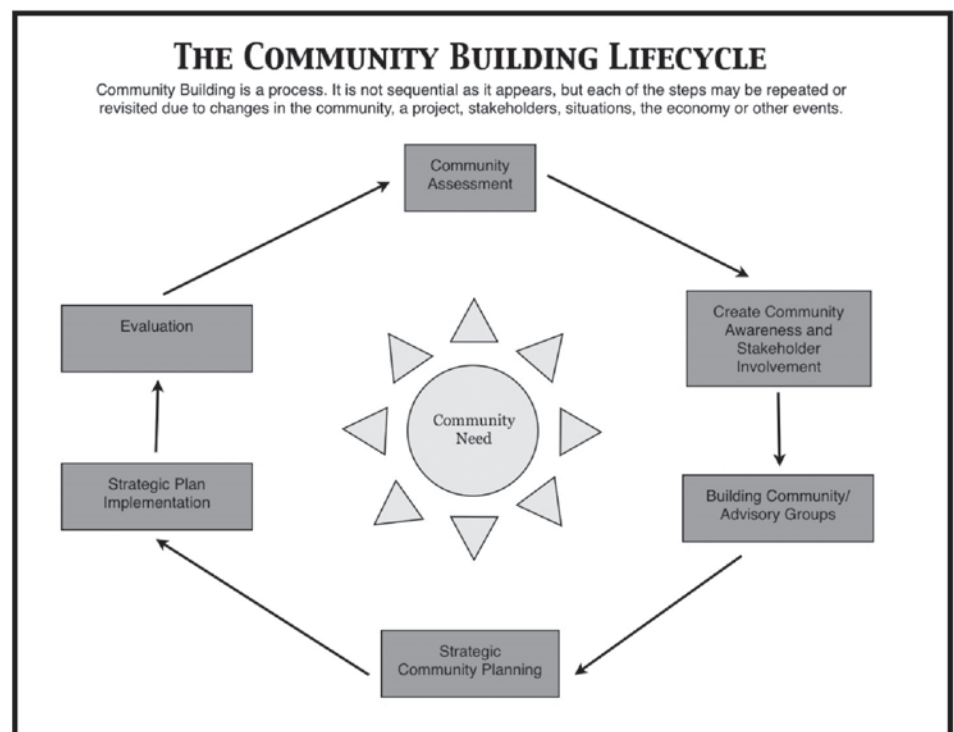
Communication is key to obtaining support (and funding) for your efforts. While most of us probably understand the basic communication tactics needed to get information out (e.g., Public Service Announcements, letters to the editor and brochures), the basics may not always be enough to grab the attention of the media or the community. The challenge is communicating in ways that engage both the media and the community. The goal is to

be creative enough that you can compete with television, the internet and the myriad other distractions communities face.

So how can we make our communications interesting as well as informational? Creative strategies might include proclamations, creative press conferences, fun community meetings and promotions.

Proclamations can be used to stake a claim on a day, week or month for your cause. Proclamations are generally made by the mayor of the town or city and often involve garnering support from an elected official. In and of itself, a proclamation can be ineffective. Coupled with a press conference and some creative highlighting, suddenly it's *news*. Press conferences involve sending a media advisory to local newspapers and television stations regarding your work, then staging a press conference.

- After noticing that young people were the largest contingency of non-voters, one Missoula group decided to get them out to vote. Typical voter registration campaigns had not inspired young people to register. The local media hadn't covered the importance of voter registration, either.



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Pink Bunnies

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The group started the *Pink Bunny Campaign* to encourage young adults to register. At a press conference where a pink bunny and pink bunny volunteers (complete with great shirts and wonderful ears), the Mayor proclaimed *Pink Bunny Day*. It was the day before voter registration ended. The event was attended by all media sources and young voters were alerted that they only had one day left in which to register.

Fun community meetings can engage stakeholders, the community and the media. The challenge is making the meeting interesting enough that the right people show up.

- One local group working on building a community food group completed research on the dramatic decline in agricultural land and availability of local food. They wanted this information distributed to stakeholders, community leaders and local government, so they held a town hall meeting where they provided a double-sided menu and a meal comprised of local foods. One side of the menu detailed where the food came from—the other side listed statistics the way the *Harper's Index* does. Stakeholders and community members showed up for a great meal. The media came to interview local leaders. Even though media representatives couldn't stay for the meal, they were able to take a menu and use the statistics.

Communication must be an integral part of each stage of the community-building lifecycle, and it must be creative enough to get attention. *Branding* the work also helps highlight the importance of the effort. Coming up with creative promotions can generate continuing interest. Branding your effort—as the young voter group did with *Pink Bunnies*—can generate a quick image and understanding of the importance of your effort. An unusual device, *Pink Bunnies*, was widely disseminated through bunny stickers that said *Register to vote or feel my wrath*, a web site (www.pinkbunnies.org), a press conference and a proclamation. What did pink bunnies have to do with voter registration? Not a darn thing. But the pink bunny volunteers were creative and committed. The results? Pink Bunnies registered 1,500 new voters, during a year when it was a city-only election.

—LaNette Diaz is a former Prevention Resource Center VISTA and VISTA Leader. Currently, she is the Neighborhood Liaison with the Office of Neighborhoods in Missoula (www.missoula-neighborhoods.org). LaNette can be reached at 406.552.6081.



JMGF AmeriCorps

The Jobs for Montana's Graduates Foundation (JMGF) is a non-profit organization established to help young people stay in school and become productive community members. One method is providing high school students and recent graduates (aged 17-24) with an AmeriCorps opportunity. JMGF AmeriCorps is a service learning program, through which participants volunteer, recruit volunteers and develop leadership skills.

Members complete 300-hour terms of service for which they receive an AmeriCorps Education Award voucher in the amount of \$1,000. This can be used for tuition at qualified institutions and/or toward qualified student loans.

One Member, Josi Tippet, had this to say about her experience with the Boys & Girls Club of Richland County: "My favorite part of volunteering with the JMGF AmeriCorps program was working with the kids. I have developed a whole new level of respect for the other volunteers and workers. They spend their time organizing and running this program for children just so they can have a safe and fun place to go to after school."

For more information, visit www.jmgf-mt.org.



Montana Youth Leadership Forum

—June Hermanson

MYLF

MYLF delegates gain access to vital resources related to assistive technology, community support and self-advocacy. This educational and motivational forum involves an intense schedule. Throughout the training, small work groups explore personal leadership and career plans.

Participant quotes:

- Teamwork and unity are the most important things I learned at MYLF.*
- I learned I can be a leader and other people could be looking up to me and I have the skills to do that.*
- This has given me confidence in going forward with my dreams.*
- What I gained from this forum is a lot of friendship, a lot of good information that will carry me through life . . . I will remember that the rest of my life.*
- Speakers helped to inspire me to help in my community and stand up for what is right.*

For more information about this year's forum, the application process, or ways to volunteer, visit: www.montanaylf.org.

—The framework for YLFs is leading by example.



The Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) is a unique leadership training program for high school students with disabilities. The majority of the volunteers for the forums are people with disabilities, as are the majority of presenters. The forums are designed to put youth with disabilities in an environment where they are the majority, often for the first time in their lives.

Statistics validate the need for the type of training offered at the Montana Youth Leadership Forum. During the 2005-06 school year, Montana Office of Public Instruction numbers show that youth with disabilities are the largest minority population in Montana's public schools. Data also shows that this population is twice as likely to drop out of school as their able-bodied peers. The implications are profound: the national unemployment rate of people with disabilities is approximately 70 percent.

Through the forums, youth come to realize that they are members of a community that comprises 19 percent of Montana's population and that they are not alone. When young people with disabilities learn who they are within the disability community, by extension they can better identify where they fit within society as a whole. This ultimately leads to success in school and in other endeavors.

To be eligible as a delegate to the program, a youth must be:

- the age equivalent of a sophomore, junior or senior in high school;
- a Montana resident; and
- a person with a disability.

All expenses for the MYLF are paid, including transportation, lodging, food, training materials, personal assistance services, interpreters and other accommodations needed to allow a youth full participation.

Youth Leadership Forums are part of a national initiative begun in California in 1992. In the interim, 23 states—including Montana—have begun conducting them. The Montana Youth Leadership Forum is funded through grants, donations, and through some state funding.

The Forum is held on a Montana college campus one week in July. Forums are staffed with volunteers from across the state, each donating a week to help empower youth with disabilities and to help them gain the skills they need to succeed with the goals they set for themselves after high school.

Topics covered at the Forum include:

- The history and culture of disability;
- Self-advocacy skills;
- Assistive technology;
- Self-esteem;
- The ADA and accommodations; and
- Vocational rehabilitation and Social Security services.

For more information about the Montana Youth Leadership Forum, visit the website at www.montanaylf.org, or contact June Hermanson at 406.442.2576 or mylfjune@bresnan.net.

Not only is it our right to be fully included in society and a part of the American dream, but it is our responsibility to reach our full potential.
—A key to the YLF philosophy

Live by a Higher Code

—Valerie Mullett

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—One thing that was constant with every Airmen we talked to was their pride in being in the military. —Pat Doyle

More than a year has passed since federal officials announced that Malmstrom Air Force Base and the surrounding communities would be one of five sites to receive grant funding in support of addressing and combating underage drinking. Great strides to put the funding to good use have been taken in the interim.

The first step was forming the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) Committee, comprised of members from Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Great Falls community. The EUDL meets monthly to make recommendations for program implementation and use of the grant funds. Members also share success stories from events sponsored by these funds.

Banik Communications in Great Falls conducted a lot of research at the base. They asked the Airmen questions about what they liked, disliked, where they spent their time on the Internet and other questions. From their answers, the creative team came up with some ideas and began working on a website.

At the EUDL meeting in September, a significant milestone was unveiled—www.USA0013.com. The team capitalized on the pride of members of the military, and came up with the slogan *Live by a Higher Code*. This is incorporated throughout the website as well as on other advertising mechanisms.

"Everyone is starting to learn what 0-0-1-3 stands for," said Steve Pre'tat, EUDL Community Coordinator. "Nowhere on this Web site will anyone find that standard message, *Don't drink and drive*. It is just not there."

Instead, the creative team used the latest trends to develop a fun place to become more educated about the harmful effects of drinking and to offer better social alternatives. The primary purpose of the site is to provide the education and tools needed to help Airman make responsible choices.

"We are in our infancy right now. We want to grow this site to be what Airman want it to be," Officer Pre'tat said. "There's a link to a blog on the site and I encourage everyone to give me feedback. I want to interact with users directly and hear their ideas for improvement and for programs they would like to see."

"Many people may not know that in one *night* of heavy drinking, a person loses two *weeks* of gym time," said Kelley Suggs, Health Education Program Manager and EUDL committee member. "It takes the body that long to recover . . . and heavy drinking is anything more than one drink per hour, three drinks per sitting."

For anyone questioning their consumption, the web site offers the *E-Chug Test*, to gauge an individual's drinking habits.

"This is not new. It has been used at college campuses—including the Air Force Academy—for quite some time," Officer Pre'tat said. "But it is truthful. Answer the questions and it will provide you with feedback on where your consumption fits in the community."

There will also be regular competitions through the site. Right now, there is a competition for amateur film makers: *Be 1, Make 1, Mach 1*. The winner will have the choice of riding in an F-16 (if military) or producing his/her own video with a professional production company. Complete details can be found on the site. Other links include a tab with resources to seek help, a calendar of upcoming local events, hot topics and a link to the photo coverage of events that have already taken place.

The grant, \$300,000 for each of the next two years, will be used to continue to fund training, equipment purchases and required items, but not all of it is committed yet.

Officer Pre'tat encourages involvement and input. "Use the Web site, get your friends involved—get everyone you *know* involved. It isn't limited to people in the Air Force or people in Great Falls."

"Our intent is not to lecture anyone," Officer Pre'tat said. "Our intent is for this to be an alternative activity site. I just want folks to relax and to let me know what they want to do."

—Valerie Mullett is the 341st Space Wing Public Affairs Office. For more information, visit www.USA0013.com.

After year one of the grant, Great Falls has seen a 33 percent drop in Minor in Possession of Alcohol offenses and a 33 percent drop in DUI arrests. Malmstrom AFB has seen a drop of 42 percent for MIP offenses and a drop of 26 percent in DUI arrests.

Older Teens and DUI

A recent report highlights the fact that impaired driving continues to be a severe and persistent threat to public safety. The number of deaths from traffic crashes involving impaired drivers is higher than the number of deaths from all other causes among persons aged 3 to 33.

Following are findings in the report:

- Combined data from 2004 to 2006 indicate that 15.1 percent of current drivers aged 18 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past 12 months and 4.7 percent drove under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year.
- Rates of past-year driving under the influence of alcohol were highest among persons aged 18 or older in Wisconsin (26.4 percent), North Dakota (24.9 percent), Minnesota (23.5 percent), Nebraska (22.9 percent), and South Dakota (21.6 percent).
- Past-year rates of driving under the influence of illicit drugs among persons aged 18 or older were highest in the District of Columbia (7.0 percent), Rhode Island (6.8 percent), Massachusetts (6.4 percent), Montana (6.3 percent), and Wyoming (6.2 percent).

Source: The NSDUH Report. National Survey on Drug Use and Health. April 17, 2008. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/stateDUI/stateDUI.pdf>

The Central Montana Youth Challenge

—Bob Feist

A rash of underage drinking in Central Montana compelled concerned agencies and schools in Lewistown to create the *Central Montana Youth Challenge*, a coalition to help teens curb underage alcohol, tobacco and drug use and bullying. The mission of the Central Montana Youth Challenge is to help youth make positive life choices with support from community-based resources.

Every fall and spring, the coalition plans activities designed to educate Central Montana students and parents about the dangers of addiction and driving under the influence. Fall activities center around Red Ribbon Week; spring events are geared toward prom and graduation, activities that have often coincided with poor choices. Area schools, including Winnett, Grass

Range, Roy, Winifred, Moore, Hobson, Stanford, Geyser and Denton, bus students to Lewistown for presentations.

During the seven years it has been in existence, the Central Montana Challenge and its supporters have brought in a number of presenters, including Mary Haydal, R5 Productions and Dr. Ernesto Randolfi. Dr. Randolfi shared local area results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey with parents. His presentation inspired the creation of another group, Community and Parent Support (CAPS) for Youth, designed to address some of the concerns brought forth by the survey results.

The *Central Montana Youth Challenge* was based on the *October Challenge* started by District Judge E. Wayne Phillips in 2001 to curb alcohol abuse in Lewistown. Judge Phillips had noticed the rate of MIPs (minor in possession) in Lewistown and realized something needed to be done. Since

2001, the Challenge has worked hard to develop a broader range of participants. An initial step was changing the name to the *Central Montana Challenge*, which included the entire geographic area.

The Central Montana Challenge now includes District 6 Human Resource Development Council, the Central Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, all of the schools in the district, the Tenth Judicial District, Central Montana Medical Center Foundation, Central Montana Pastor's Fellowship, Safe Kids-Safe Communities, Central Montana Youth Mentoring Program, Journey Recovery, Central Montana Health District, and the Central Montana Foundation. The joint efforts of all these agencies are helping Central Montana youth make positive choices.

Bob Feist is the Central Montana Tobacco Prevention Specialist for District 6 HRDC. He can be reached in Lewistown, Montana at 406.5357488 or RFeist@mt.gov.

Apprenticeship: Links with Higher Education

Apprenticeship is the front door to the skilled trades, a structured and systematic way for a young worker to gain skills and to advance technically and financially. No two apprenticeship programs are identical, because each is tailored to meet the needs of a specific craft and local conditions.

The *Apprenticeship and Training Program* has established working partnerships with several four-year institutions, colleges of technology and community

colleges across Montana since 2004. These partnerships are relatively new in context with the 67-year history of Montana's apprenticeship community. They have provided the opportunity for employer-driven advisory committees representing several industries to give input into developing related one-year certificates and two-year associate degree programs. The development and standardization of curricula, instructor qualifications, transfer of educational credits and acquiring start-up funding are a few of issues these committees have addressed. Currently, the Apprenticeship and Training Program has several working agreements with higher education:

- Montana State University-Northern/Havre: AAS degree programs in Plumbing Technology and Electrical Construction.
- Flathead Valley Community College/Kalispell: A one-year certificate program in Plumbing Technology and an AAS degree program in Electrical Construction.

— The BILT Grant Partnership in Carpentry supports two-year AAS degree programs in carpentry, which have been established at MSU-Northern, three community colleges and three Colleges of Technology.

— Montana Tech/University of Montana College of Technology/Butte: A pre-apprenticeship linemen school.

All programs in Montana's construction industry conform to national standards for apprenticeship programs as well as state and federal laws. They are also registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training under the US Department of Labor.

Source: Apprenticeship Opportunities in the Trades. Published by the Montana Apprenticeship and Training Directors Association, August 2005. For more information, call 406-442-9964 or visit <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/apprenticeship/apprentice.asp>.

Strengthening Montana

—Governor Schweitzer

I understand the benefits a well educated workforce will bring to Montana, so reducing obstacles to higher education has been one of the priorities of my administration. Last year, we capped tuition and created more scholarships under the *Best and Brightest* scholarship program.

Traditional higher education is one of many roads that will lead to a skilled workforce and the creation of life-long learners. What we need to remember is that every road must keep youth engaged, leave them with saleable skills and provide the means to earn a good living right here in Montana.

The technical trades are exploding with opportunity. Right now we're seeing a shortage of technical skills of all sorts. We need truck drivers, welders, mechanics, plumbers, builders and electricians, to name just a few. The need and the means to cultivate alternative energy sources are growing every day, too. As a result, the jobs that are becoming available in today's world are far different than they were ten years ago. The job market will continue to evolve.

Apprenticeship opportunities in the trades, as well as one- and two-year certificates and associate degree programs are great avenues for creating life-long learners and a stronger economic base for our state. Apprenticeship offers a structured



way for young workers to learn the skills of a trade, to advance in ability and earnings, and to gain the background they need to keep pace with technological changes. Apprenticeship combines on-the-job training under skilled supervision with classroom instruction.

Apprenticeships can also be the road to economic stability. The average 3rd year, registered apprentice in Montana earns \$15.57 an hour, for a gross annual wage of \$32,386. The average journeymen wage for the Montanans who have completed apprenticeships ranges from \$22 to \$30 per hour. But the best news is some that is based on current Unemployment Insurance Wage data: 85 percent of all those who completed apprenticeships since 1997 are still working in Montana in the occupations they completed the program in.

I'm proud of the way Montana has been able to honor students willing to invest their futures here, through scholarships, reduced costs – and alternative roads. We are working hard to create students for life, people who love and practice learning from preschool through adults. It's the only way that we'll be able to ensure that Montana stays on the move and competitive in a changing world economy.

Economic impacts of apprenticeship (2005/06):

- ***Montana's apprenticeship sponsors paid more than \$42 million in wages to Montana apprentices.***
- ***Montana's registered apprentices paid an estimated \$7 million dollars in state and federal taxes.***
- ***For every dollar the state invested in registered apprenticeships, employers paid \$117.00 in wages and apprentices contributed \$20.29 in taxes.***

Montana's Apprenticeship and Training Program

Currently Montana's Apprenticeship and Training Program:

- *Has 1,500 registered Montana apprentices;*
- *Provides oversight for registered apprentices in 58 different occupations;*
- *In 53 of Montana's 56 counties; and*
- *Extends over 120 separate communities.*

The program estimates that:

- *225 apprentices will complete in fiscal year 2007/08;*
- *654 independent employers are registered apprenticeship sponsors;*
- *35 Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees are active; and*
- *300 union employers are utilizing apprenticeship.*

Who are the registered apprentices in Montana?

- *90% work in construction-related occupations*
- *5% work in service-related industries*
- *5% work in the utility-related industries*
- *51% of the apprentice population is registered to independent employers, with the remaining 49% registered to union-sponsored programs*
- *6% are female*
- *6% are minorities*
- *12 to 15% are veterans*
- *Average age of 26 to 34 years*

The Last Word

—Joan Cassidy, Chief, Chemical Dependency Bureau

Prevention is a science . . . and an art. It is a science that can have a profound effect on lives and on communities. The art comes into play with the appropriate application of science at individual, community and school levels. Ultimately, prevention means addressing issues before they become critical. Proper application of the science of prevention can save untold human distress, resources, time and money. We know that science-based prevention works, and that the interplay between the science of research and the art of working with children and youth makes profound differences in lives.

Wherever children and youth interact with others, whether in the community, the school, the family or the peer domains, there are risk and protective factors. At the same time, people bring their own qualities and characteristics to each interaction. According to *Science-Based Substance Abuse Prevention: a Guide**, these and other factors act as a filter to color the nature and tone of interactions—for the

positive or the negative. Within the school or work domains, bonding, climate, policy and performance all come into play. Within the community domain, bonding, norms, resources awareness and mobilization come into play. Research also reveals that impact within domains is not static: at any level, impact is dependent on a number of contingencies, both hidden and overt. Interactions are complicated and change over time with the ongoing development of the individual. It is safe to say that time, changes in experience and the developmental level of the individual consistently result in altered perceptions and interactions. It's complicated. So while we have learned a great deal about the *science* of prevention, there is much to learn about the art.

A deficit model of prevention uses intervention strategies to change behaviors already placing a youth at risk, such as school failure, drug abuse or criminal behavior. On a more positive note, the youth development model shifts to emphasizing, recognizing and building on strengths. This method supports young people by recognizing them for their ideas, assets and ability to contribute. This

promotes hope, empowerment, connection to the community, and, ultimately, the realization that there are no limits to opportunity.

The right spectrum of opportunities needed to give youth a chance to be engaged and involved is science-based. Reaching a young person at the right time, with the right message, in the right dose is an art. And succeeding in prevention takes all of the science, the art . . . and the luck . . . at our disposal.

This issue of the *Prevention Connection* speaks to a number of strategies working at the community and school levels, not the least of which are economic development tools that families need to begin moving out of poverty, the kind of tools that offer hope for a strong future. Successful prevention offers unlimited rewards: the sense of connection and commitment, ability and the motivation to succeed are all gifts that keep on giving for a lifetime.

**Science-Based Substance Abuse Prevention: a Guide.* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Division of Knowledge Development and Evaluation: www.doe.in.gov/sdfsc/pdf/GuidetoSci-BasedPrac1.pdf

CSAP Center for
Substance Abuse
Prevention

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration

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MONTANA
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